

The Passing of the Range

BY

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WINNIPEG

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I

I am nothin' but a cow-boy, and I guess I'm odd and strange,
But it nearly makes me sick to see the passin' of the range.
It seems to be decided that the range has got to go,
The cow men are admittin' this, and well they ought to know.
So there'll be no more big round-ups, nor a-campin' on the plains,
While the stars are whisperin' to you and the dreamy silence reigns;
No more wanderin' up and down the trails, for they say the Progress
 Plow
Needs the acres for the millions that's a-pushin' westward now.

II.

There's to be no more of singin' with the joy that's in your breast,
There's to be no more of laughin' where a feller laughs his best,
There's to be no more of evenin's spent in jestin' by the fire,
Where each one just seemed tryin' for to be the biggest liar.
There's to be no more listenin' to the north wind moanin' round
The corners of your camp house, scarcely clingin' to the ground.
There's to be no more moonlight dances where old faces loved to come,
Where their eyes kept talking to you, tho' their lips were sometimes
 dumb.

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III.

There's to be no more livin' 'way out here alone with God,
The feller with the hoe is comin' to claim the native sod.
Soon the wheat fields will be stretchin' o'er this great green grassy
sea,

Where the waves a-comin' to you sets your pen to poetry;
Where old Nature sings of something sweeter than you ever knew,
While you dream of childhood's posies and the places where they
grew.

Where there's just a sea of blossoms stretchin' out before your eyes,
And a depthless blue is hangin' in the turquoise-tinted skies.

IV.

Where the wild wind laughed and called you goin' up the lonesome
trails,
And the white clouds in the distance looked like ships with silvery
sails.

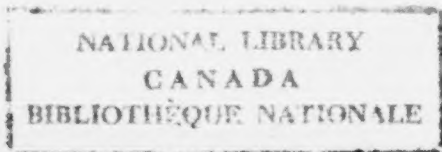
Where you half forgot the cattle that was pokin' on ahead,
And you let a daydream get you and just follow where they led.
Where we broke the buckin' broncho and lassoed the maddened steer,
Where we slew the fatted buffalo and pursued the fleedin' deer.
Where we rode the winding circle in a sort of aimless way,
Or went gallopin' together up the range on brandin' day.

V.

Holdin' thousands of wild cattle in a herd without a fear,
Ropin', throwin', tiein', brandin' on the freedom fraught frontier,
Where we slept upon our sougans, after hours of ridin' hard,
With our saddle for a pillow and our broncho for a guard.
Where we looked off to the eastward as the horizon dropped down,
And we knew the dusk was stealin' through the byways of the town.
Then old memory came a-slippin' up behind and roped our heart,
And we somehow had a feelin' that we'd missed the sweetest part.

VI.

Then you thought of other years, and felt yourself a sort of wreck,
And you kinder longed to feel a woman's arms around your neck.
You can get along without her when the day is full of swing,
When you're livin' in the saddle, and the hours are on the wing;
But you're mighty sure to want her when the evenin' shadows fall,
For there's nothin' like a woman clingin' to you, after all;
I'm sure no richer blessing can your cup of fortune fill,
Than those furnished by a woman—if she only will.



VII.

Well, the cowboy days are over, but we ain't the ones to rail,
So we'll get our plunder ready and prepare to hit the trail.
We would all be lost, I'm certain, in a pasture plowed and mowed,
For we've been too used to freedom on the ranges Nature grewed.
Where now the gentle zephyr steals the perfume from the rose,
Where the poplar bends its branches, and the yellow daisy grows;
Will be heard the sound of reapers swellin' to the summer sky,
The hoarse song of the field hands and a mother's lullaby.

VIII.

Now I reckon you've a notion I'm a-talkin' sorter odd,
But we loved these boundless prairies that seemed leadin' us to God;
And I wonder if the people that's a-comin' on to-day
Will remember how the cowboy went ahead and blazed the way.
Course we can't help kinder thinkin' that we've played a losin' hand,
And I fear the comin' tenderfoot won't hardly understand.
It was ours to rough it, maybe, and to go ahead and lead;
So the critters that's a-comin now wouldn't frighten and stampede.

IX.

But now that things are ready and our work has all been done,
We'll turn our faces westward toward the settin' sun.
All the papers are a-sayin that the big ranch days are gone,
So the cowboy and his broncho will be movin' further on.
But I tell you it's a-breakin of our hearts to say goodbye
To those glorious plains and flowers, to this matchless, dreamy sky,
And I wonder what we'll do, we mavericks of human kind,
When the range has all been taken, and there ain't no more to find?

X.

The world has heard but little 'bout the part of us that's good,
For the bad side's always foremost, and they've never understood.
But we heard the same old stories that your mothers told to you;
I know that we are sorter rough—but we all had mothers, too.
But some day the folks that's comin', though they think us odd and
strange,
Will drain their brimmin' glasses to the boys that rode the range.
They will write of us in poetry, and sing of us in song,
But I guess this will not happen until we're dead and gone.

XI.

We have had no costly steeples, pointin' out the way to go ;
 But I 'low we didn't need 'em, for the boys all seemed to know.
 We have had no boiled-shirt preachers tellin' how we had to change,
 But there was no need of preachin' to the boys that rode the range.
 They were made out of the metal that, without a human guide,
 Could find the proper pathway leadin' to the great Divide.
 But when the world's a-throbbin' to old Gabriel's trumpet sound,
 And the folks begin to gather from the ranches all around—

XII.

When the ones the Church has branded marches up and answers,
 "Here!"
 With us poor dejected mavericks a-bringin' up the rear ;
 When the human herd is waitin there, in the great corral,
 Where the good you've done will find you, and they say the bad as
 well ;
 When we all shall face the Judge that will know where we belong ;
 Where there ain't no buyin' over, and each must own his wrong—
 Well, I can't help sorter' thinkin', though perhaps I orten to,
 Old Peter will say firmly, "JUST PASS THE COWBOYS
 THROUGH."

